

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Full Council

Thursday 16 October 2025

Decision Report

Recommendation:

Allotment Wildlife Ponds

The Council consider the request of allowing Wildlife Ponds on the town's allotment sites under the attached amended Wildlife Pond Policy (Appendix 1). The Policy includes a number of caveats and would be regularly reviewed.

Ward

Bebside & Kitty Brewster, Cowpen, Isabella, Plessey, Wensleydale & Newsham

Risk Management

There would be no impact on financial budgets if there was a change in policy. There is no legal restriction on the Council changing policy if they wish to. Ponds on allotment sites can be permitted for environmental reasons, however; ponds can be hazardous particularly for children and wildlife, and steps would need to be taken to mitigate risk. Currently allotment holders must ask for permission, and this will formalise the current arrangements.

Objective

To consider the attached policy as part of the democratic process.

Crime Prevention

There would be no Crime Prevention implications to consider with regard to this matter.

Report

The allotment wildlife ponds policy was recommended by the Environment Committee at a meeting held 27 May 2025 and subsequently considered at the meeting of the Full Council held 17 July 2025. It was resolved to withdraw the policy pending further research, and discussions with the Allotment Associations, also looking at the options for raised ponds.

Blyth Town Council (BTC) has responsibility for 10 allotment sites across Blyth.

BTC has previously refused any new wildlife ponds when the request has been for a large pre-formed pond as the primary focus should be on allotment gardening i.e. the production of fresh fruit and vegetables in line with the 75% cultivation requirements as per the tenancy agreement. This view was supported by the Blyth Smallholdings & Allotment Association (BSHAA) and the Newsham & New Delaval Allotment Association (NNDAA) who manage five sites on a day-to-day basis on behalf of BTC. The Association views on wildlife ponds remains the same.

Regarding the matter of raised ponds, this is discouraged as it promotes bringing external materials onto the allotments and it could cause a trip hazard.

The following extract has been added to the draft policy to distinguish the water sources provided for ducks, geese or pigeons from the proposed wildlife ponds.

'Presently on sites some tenants have ducks/geese who use troughs of different sizes to allow them to bath in and even to feed and should be sited within a controlled area. On our sites and those managed by the 2 associations we have a large number of pigeon fanciers who use different size vessels to allow their birds to bath in when they are allowed, but not on a daily basis. These range in sizes from 1000mm x 500mm and between 100mm to 300 deep and should be considered as part of this report and included into the policy'.

Wildlife ponds should not exceed 2 square meters in surface area. The depth of the pond should not exceed 60cm at its deepest point to minimize risks to children and animals. Ideally, ponds should be at a depth of 20–60cm (8in–2ft), which varies across the pond, as this will suit the majority of pond flora and fauna.

BTC has received an increasing number of requests for wildlife ponds in the past year and together with the increasing recognition of the environmental benefits of ponds, such as increasing biodiversity, has led to this decision report.

David Clough
General Service Officer

& Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk

7 October 2025



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

WILDLIFE POND POLICY FOR ALLOTMENT SITES

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1. Introduction

Blyth Town Council has responsibility for 10 allotment sites across Blyth, as follows; Bolam Avenue, Twenty Third Ave, Twentieth Avenue, Newsham Side Club, Beatrice Avenue, Tenth Avenue, Delaval Gardens, Laverock Place, Bebside and Wensleydale Terrace.

The Bolam Avenue, Twentieth Avenue and Twenty Third Ave sites are managed on a day-to-day basis by Blyth Smallholdings & Allotment Association (BSHAA). The Newsham Side Club and Beatrice Avenue (old) sites are managed on a day-to-day basis by the Newsham & New Delaval Allotment Association (NNDAA).

The purpose of this policy is to outline the guidelines and procedures for the safe installation and maintenance of wildlife ponds on allotment sites across the town. The aim is to promote biodiversity while ensuring safety, environmental sustainability, and the enjoyment of all plot holders.

Ponds on allotment sites are permitted for environmental reasons. However, tenants need to be mindful that ponds can be hazardous for children and wildlife and should take steps in their design to mitigate risk. Additionally, having a pond is not a primary purpose of having an allotment plot and the keeping ornamental or edible fish (e.g. Koi Carp) is not permitted.

Presently on sites some tenants have ducks/geese who use troughs of different sizes to allow them to bath in and even to feed and should be sited within a controlled area. On our sites and those managed by the 2 associations we have a large number of pigeon fanciers who use different size vessels to allow their birds to bath in when they are allowed, but not on a daily basis. These range in sizes from 100cm x 50cm and between 10cm to 30cm deep.

The overriding consideration when contemplating the installation of a pond is its potential hazard to people and animals. As example: new ponds created using old baths are potentially hazardous and are therefore not permitted. In addition, a pond should not impact on the 75% cultivation which is included in the tenancy agreement.

All ponds must be within a fenced allotment plot, with secure gate access, to prevent anyone, particularly young children, from easily accessing the pond. Signage must also be displayed advising that a pond is placed on the allotment plot. Consideration should also be given to placing netting over the pond to reduce the risk of drowning.

It is the plot holders, responsibility for the safety and the on-going regular maintenance of the pond and if children come onto the plot they must be supervised at all times. It is the allotment plot holder's responsibility for the safe management of the pond. The Town Council and/or Allotment Associations are not responsible.

2. Application Process

The application process is as follows:

Submission

Allotment plot holders wishing to install a wildlife pond must submit a written request to Blyth Town Council. For plot holders on sites managed by BSHAA and NNDAA the Town Council will liaise with the relevant Association in handling any request. The request should include:

- The proposed location of the pond (Allotment Site and Plot Number).
- The dimensions and depth of the pond.
- The type of materials to be used.
- A brief plan detailing the intended design, including any planting and landscaping.
- Confirmation that the pond is fenced off and signage will be in place advising of a pond.

Review

The Town Council will review the application, considering factors such as safety, impact on neighbouring plots, and overall site aesthetics. The Town Council reserves the right to request additional information or suggest modifications, liaising with the relevant Association, where applicable.

Approval

If approved, the allotment plot holder will receive written permission to proceed with the pond installation. Any significant changes to the approved plan must be resubmitted to the Town Council for approval.

3. Design & Construction Rules

The application process requires the pond to meet the following requirements:

Safety

Safety is paramount and all ponds must be within a fenced allotment plot with secure gate access to prevent anyone, particularly children, from easily accessing the pond. The pond should be as far from access paths

as possible to minimize the risk of accidental falls. Signage must be displayed advising that a pond is placed on the allotment plot.

Consideration should be given to the use of small gauge netting to reduce the risk of drowning and the protection of pond and other wildlife.

Ponds should have gently sloping edges, or shelved areas, to allow wildlife to easily enter and exit the pond. Tenants must demonstrate they have taken seriously the need to aid animals, such as hedgehogs, in escaping the pond.

It is the allotment plot holder's responsibility for the safe management of the pond. As stated, the Town Council and/or Allotment Associations are not responsible.

Size and Depth

Ponds should not exceed 2 square meters in surface area. The depth of the pond should not exceed 60cm at its deepest point to minimize risks to children and animals. Ideally, ponds should be at a depth of 20–60cm (8in–2ft), which varies across the pond, as this will suit the majority of pond flora and fauna.

Materials

The use of non-toxic, wildlife-friendly materials is mandatory. Liners, if used, must be durable and designed specifically for pond use only.

Biodiversity

In developing the ponds consideration should be given to prioritising the use of native aquatic plants to support local wildlife and avoid introducing non-native or invasive species.

Consideration should also be given to incorporating features such as shallow areas, logs, and stones to provide habitat diversity.

4. Environmental Considerations

Environmental considerations are important and plot holders must consider:

Water Conservation

Ponds should be filled using rainwater or recycled water where possible to conserve resources. Plot holders should avoid using treated tap water, as it can harm pond wildlife.

Chemical Use

The use of chemicals, including fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, near the pond is strictly prohibited to protect the ecosystem.

5. Maintenance & Inspection

Regular on-going maintenance to the pond is very important. The pond will be regularly inspected by the Town Council and/or the Allotment Association where applicable.

Plot holders who apply for permission to install a pond must agree to keep the pond in good repair and take all reasonable measures to maintain its safety for both people and animals. The plot holder must ensure regular maintenance including water quality management, plant care, and debris removal. The pond should be kept free of pollutants and harmful substances.

The Town Council reserves the right to inspect the pond regularly to ensure compliance with this policy. This will be done in partnership with Allotment Associations, where applicable.

If the pond is not maintained to an acceptable standard, the Town Council and/or the Association may require corrective actions or, in extreme cases, request that the pond be removed.

6. Termination & Removal

If a plot holder wishes to remove the pond, they must consult with the Town Council to ensure no harm to the surrounding environment or wildlife.

When a plot holder relinquishes their tenancy, BTC will assess whether it is practical to keep the pond.

The Town Council may decide upon the mandatory removal of the pond if it is deemed unsafe, poorly maintained or in violation of this policy. Correspondence between the Council and the tenant will take place to ensure no harm to the surrounding environment or wildlife. Should the plot holder not comply then this will result in their tenancy being terminated by the Town Council and/or the Association.

Decisions made by the Town Council are final.

7. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the allotment community and environmental best practices.